

It's Smart To Be Gallery Wise!

THE WILLIAM ROCKHILL NELSON GALLERY OF ART

AND ATKINS MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

N E W S F L A S H E S

November 1,

1937

NOVEMBER LOAN EXHIBITION: The current loan exhibition will be of wide interest and will introduce a new phase of art in the domain of gallery shows. It will be composed of a series of Stage Designs and Costumes, for the most part of current successes in the theatre, and will include the work of three outstanding designers, Jo Mielziner, Stewart Chaney, and Rex Whistler.

The son of a portrait painter, Jo Mielziner was born in Paris in 1901, and is therefore one of America's youngest as well as most successful stage designers. His early training in drawing was with his father and this artist background is no doubt the reason why his sketches and costume plates are valid and important works of art in addition to their original flair for the theatre. He came to America at the age of eleven and later studied at the Art Students' League. He won the Crosson Traveling Scholarship and spent much time in Europe investigating the methods of Reinhardt and Joseph Urban.

His interest in the theatre is understandable as his brother is the distinguished actor, Kenneth MacKenna, and it was his advice that led Mielziner to attempt acting to prepare him for his designing. Later he worked with Robert Edmond Jones and designed sets for the Theatre Guild. His first commission was for William A. Brady, Jr., and since then he has staged almost one hundred productions, including such outstanding successes as "Street Scene", "Strange Interlude", "The Guardsman", and "The Barrets of Wimpole Street".

Of Mr. Mielziner's talent, Guthrie McClintic, the director of Katherine Cornell, has said; "He does not look upon the play as the peg on which to hang stage pictures. He is a collaborator first last and always - with the author, the actor, and the director. Foremost among his attributes I would place style and a sculptural quality. He has a virility in his designing that is beyond that of most of the designers of today, and with it, he brings a rich beauty to the stage." Other critics have spoken of his ability to make of his settings not stage properties, but rooms that have been lived in. Royal Cortissoz wrote of this exhibition; "I am impressed by the manner in which Mr. Mielziner's sets seize upon the imagination, alike in realistic and romantic moods. The designs for "Ethan Frome" are extraordinarily eloquent of the spirit of the play".

Mr. Mielziner will be represented by his designs for the John Gielgud production of "Hamlet", and for "Ethan Frome", "Romeo and Juliet", "Wingless Victory", "High Tor", "The Yellow Jacket", and "Winterset".

Of particular interest to Kansas City will be a group of sketches by Stewart Chaney who is a native of Kansas City and who has recently achieved a signal success with his stage designs. His abilities in this field first attracted attention while he was a student at Yale University. Here he designed a permanent setting for Goethe's "Faust", in which a revolving stage was used and in which changes were accomplished by lighting effects.

Mr. Chaney, who is at present in Russia studying stage design and writing an article on his production of "Hamlet" for the Moscow Art Magazine, will be represented by the series of sets for "Faust", for the Stravinsky Ballet "Apollon Musagete" which was danced by the American Ballet at the Metropolitan Opera, the sets and costumes for the Leslie Howard production of "Hamlet" which was seen here last season, for the Elsie Schauffler play "Parnell", for the Zoe

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Akins plays "O Evening Star" and "The Old Maid", and for the Philip Barry play "Spring Dance".

The third stage designer to be represented is Rex Whistler, a young Englishman who has studied at the Royal Academy in London and at the Slade School. His work attracted the attention of Lord Duveen who early became his patron. Whistler has done a number of murals in London, including a series in the Tate Gallery, has illustrated Hans Anderson's Fairy Tales and a number of other books and has done scenic work for many London productions.

His most important work in America has been the settings and costumes for the Helen Hayes production of "Victoria Regina", which has been the outstanding play in New York for two seasons and which will be seen in Kansas City this winter. Fourteen original water-colour studies for this most interesting drama on the life of Queen Victoria will be included in the show.

The exhibition will open on Sunday, October 31st, and will continue through the month of November.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH: For the month of November, the Masterpieces will be the first important acquisition of the permanent collection for the current year. It is a life-size representation of St. John the Baptist by the outstanding Venetian Renaissance sculptor, Tiziano Aspetti, who was the great-nephew of the painter Titian.

It is in warm coloured sandstone in the complete round and fully signed and documented. It represents the Saint as he meditated in the desert and is the only monumental work by this sculptor in America. Aspetti has conceived Saint John as tall, meagre, and haggard from his continued fasting. The body is beautifully handled and articulated and the structure of the torso is particularly alive and vital. The head is a superlative example of modeling and the expression of inner questioning on the face is heightened by the half-closed lids and their Scopasian treatment. The sculptor has successfully combined the wiry energy and the asceticism of Donatello with the contraposto and the greater intensity of Michelangelo.

Aspetti was born near Padua in 1565, but went to Venice when still young and came under the influence of Sansovino and of Alessandro Vittorino. A number of his early works are still in situ in the Ducal Palace, the Mint and in the church of San Francisco della Vigna, and show the hand of a youthful artist. In 1590 he left Venice for Padua where his work almost immediately showed a great improvement and a definite knowledge of Donatello. Here he carried out many commissions for the Basilica of Saint Anthony and for private chapels. Our Saint John would seem to date from his late Paduan period, just before he left for Pisa in 1604. He was employed here by Nobile Berzighelli and died in this city in 1607.

The Saint John was undoubtedly made for a chapel containing the baptismal font. It is not known when it left Italy, but it has been in a private collection in England for a number of years before coming to the Gallery. It bears the signature, "OPUS TITIANI... I F", and with our Moschino group, is the second signed example of Italian Renaissance sculpture in the Gallery collection, a unique distinction in American museums.

WEDNESDAY EVENING LECTURES: On November 3rd, the Wednesday Evening lecture will be devoted to Greek Sculpture through the archaic period and the 5th century B.C. and will be given by Mr. Gardner. This covers the superb early Apollo types, the sculpture of the Parthenon and the work of Phidias, Polyclitos, and Myron.

Later Greek Sculpture of the 4th century B.C. and the Hellenistic period will be discussed on Wednesday evening, November 10th. At that time Mr. Sickman will consider the work of Praxiteles, Scopas, and Lysippus and the more dramatic and realistic conceptions of Hellenistic Sculpture.

As a background for the loan exhibition of stage sets, Miss

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Hughes will lecture on Wednesday Evening, November 17th, on a history of Theatre Art. The elaborate stage settings of the modern theatre are not a recent development, as the Romans evolved complicated arrangements, with intricate machinery for various effects. It is interesting to note how the pendulum swings back and forth, to the simple stage of the Elizabethan Drama to the bewildering perspectives of the 18th century and back to the trend for simplicity in our modern theatre. The use of light is the great contribution and innovation of the twentieth century.

On Wednesday Evening, November 24th, the night before Thanksgiving, there will be no lecture and the Gallery will not observe its usual opening.

FRIDAY EVENING OPENINGS: While it is still too soon, perhaps, to gauge the public response to the Friday evening openings of the Gallery, the attendance has been gratifying and has increased each week. It has been decided to continue the experiment for the first three Fridays in November, when the Gallery will be open without charge from 7 to 9 p.m.

Again there will be no formal lecture, but discussional gallery talks will be given. On November 5th, Miss Hughes will talk in the loan galleries on the Theatre Art Exhibition. On November 12th Miss Jackson will discuss American painting of the 18th and 19th centuries in Gallery XXIX, and on November 19th Mr. Sickman will speak on Chinese Bronzes in Gallery XXV. The Gallery will be closed on the Friday evening after Thanksgiving, November 26th.

EXHIBITION OF CHINESE PAINTINGS: A selection of Chinese Paintings from the permanent collection has been installed in Gallery XXIV. The group has been chosen with a view to representing the principle trends from the 13th to the 18th centuries. Outstanding is an exceptionally fine landscape of the Sung Dynasty (1127-1279) and the Yuan period is represented by a sensitive and accomplished landscape from the brush of Sheng Mou, a painter of the 14th century.

Several other mountain scenes show the artists of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) working in the tradition of the great Sung school. Two compositions of birds show the Chinese artists' mastery of subjects from wild life, and one representing a wild swan attacked by a falcon is particularly spirited and dramatic. Furniture and a handsome pair of 18th century ox-blood vases, the gift of Miss Frances M. Logan, contribute an atmospheric installation.

REHANGING OF FRENCH PAINTINGS: Galleries XII and XIII have been rehung so that the later group of French 19th century painters, including Van Gogh, Manet, Monet, Loiseau, Friesz, Seurat, Masson, and L'Hote are now exhibited in Gallery XIII. Gallery XII will be devoted to the more traditional 19th century men who were not definitely of the Barbizon group.

GALLERY CHANGES: A selection of objects presented to the Gallery by Mrs. Jacob Leander Loose has been installed in Gallery XV.

The American Indian Rooms have been reorganized and rehung. An interesting series of stone and pottery figures of the archaic Mexican civilization, the recent gift of Mrs. David M. Lighton, is now on exhibition for the first time. There has also been placed on display a group of Alaskan Indian objects lent by Dr. and Mrs. B. L. Myers. These were collected during a long residence in Alaska.

GALLERY ACTIVITIES: During the recent conventions and American Royal Week, many groups of out-of-town visitors used the guide facilities of the Gallery.

On October 29th, the Director spoke in Wichita under the auspices of the Delphian Society on the subject of Modern Art.

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JUNIOR EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES: Tours of the American Wing and American painting galleries, for the seventh grade classes of the public schools, will begin November 4th and continue on Thursday and Friday afternoons through the winter. The period rooms of the American Wing, ranging from the Keeping Room of the Pilgrim era to the Salem dining room with its strong French influence following the Revolutionary War, offer a vivid setting for the study of American history in the regular seventh grade curriculum.

Little Museum of Young Moderns: The staff of the Little Museum announces the opening on November 8th of an exhibition of American Indian artifacts, lent by Connoisseurs and friends of the museum.

The Game Tray: Hunt and Colour and the question games may be enjoyed by any young gallery visitor from ten o'clock until four-thirty each Saturday. Also Drawing for Fun continues at two-thirty for any child who is interested in joining.

FRIENDS OF ART STUDY CLUB: The meeting day for the Study Class of the Friends of Art has been changed from the first and third Wednesday at eleven o'clock, to the second and fourth Wednesday at the same hour. On November 10th, Miss Hughes will lead the discussion on the exhibition of Theatre Art, while on the 24th Mr. Gardner will tell of some of the current exhibitions in New York.

C A L E N D A R

Wed.,	Nov.	3,	8:00	- Lecture - Greek Sculpture - Mr. Gardner
Fri.,	"	5,	8:00	- Gallery Talk - Theatre Designs - Miss Hughes
Wed.,	"	10,	11:00	- Friends of Art Study Class - Library
Wed.,	"	10,	8:00	- Lecture - Later Greek Sculpture - Mr. Sickman
Fri.,	"	12,	8:00	- Gallery Talk - American Painting - Miss Jackson
Sun.,	"	14,	3:30	- Concert - Atkins Auditorium
Wed.,	"	17,	8:00	- Lecture - Theatre Art - Miss Hughes
Fri.,	"	19,	8:00	- Gallery Talk - Chinese Bronzes - Mr. Sickman
Sat.,	"	20,	10:30 and 2:30	- Tony Sarg Marionette Players in "Robinson Crusoe" - tickets may be obtained at sales desk or through Junior League
Sun.,	"	21,	3:30	- Concert - Atkins Auditorium
Wed.,	"	24,	11:00	- Friends of Art Study Class - Library
Wed.,	"	24,		No evening opening
Thurs.,	"	25,		Thanksgiving - Gallery Closed
Fri.,	"	26,		No evening opening
Sun.,	"	28,	3:30	- Concert - Atkins Auditorium

William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art
Kansas City, Missouri

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